

The Art of Balancing a Light Switch Between On and Off

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The Art of Balancing a Light Switch Between On and Off (DISCONTINUED) by orphan_account

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Genre: Beverly Marsh & Richie Tozier Are Best Friends, Bisexual Richie Tozier, Everyone Is Gay, Gay Stanley Uris, Multi, idk what else to tag, no one really knows whats going on with richie, richie has adhd, they swear a lot

Language: English

Characters: Alvin Marsh, Arlene Hanscom, Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Georgie Denbrough, Henry Bowers, Leroy Hanlon, Maggie Tozier, Mike Hanlon, Reginald "Belch" Huggins, Richie Tozier, Sharon Denbrough, Sonia Kaspbrak, Stanley Uris, Victor Criss, Wentworth Tozier, Zack Denbrough

Relationships: Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough/Mike Hanlon/Stanley Uris, Bill Denbrough/Stanley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

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Summary:

Summers in Derry are always strange, but this one is the weirdest they've had for years. Leaves still line the streets, cold breezes brush peoples' shoulders, and Jackie Russo is unnerved by the fact that her seven clients are closed off. She brings them together one day, and a beautiful relationship blossoms.

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Richie took a deep breath and closed his eyes, trying to calm himself down. He could hear his parents shouting the floor below him, and they wouldn't *shut the fuck up*, and he couldn't *breathe*, and he wanted to *die*. His shirt was too scratchy, his mother's shrill voice *hurt*, his socks were made of a fucking *relentless* fabric, his shoes were too tight, his shirt was too tight, it was all *too fucking much*.

He ended up pulling his shirt off, kicking his shoes off (and hitting the wall, making a tiny dent in it) and ripping off his socks, then slipping down onto the floor and hugging his knees. He buried his face in his arms and took a deep, shaky breath. *I have an hour*. He let his fingers thread through his hair, tugging a bit before letting his hand fall limp next to him.

Richie hauled himself up and slipped on a *comfortable* shirt and his *good* socks. He slipped his shoes back on, making sure to tie them enough so they wouldn't fall off, but not tight to the point where it fucking *hurt*, like he did last time. He wanted to look nice, sure, but if that meant not being able to breathe, *fuck that*.

He grabbed a pack of Marlboros and his lighter and shoved them in his pocket, grabbed his phone, and ran downstairs. He froze when his father shouted, "And where the fuck are you going?"

"Out."

"Oh, you little -"

"Leave him alone, he's obviously got more important things to do than spend time with his family," Richie's mother cut in harshly. He sighed softly and balled his fists, his entire body heating up with rage. Instead of replying, which he knew would warrant a slap and a grounding, he walked out.

It was chilly outside. Of course Derry had to be fucking *weird* and have a cold day in the middle of summer, because why the fuck not? He shook his hair out of his eyes and started walking towards Jackie's

office. It was only a mile or so away, but it was irritating because he kept having to stop every five fucking seconds and look behind himself.

He vowed that for every leaf he saw (seriously, Derry, what the fuck, why are there leaves on the ground during the summer?) he would stomp on it. Fulfilling his promise was extremely gratifying. He got to her office in a little under forty minutes. He sighed and sat on the pavement outside of it, deciding he needed a *fucking* smoke, because holy *shit*, he could barely feel his fingers. He spent about five minutes trying to get his lighter to work before he realised that it was dead.

Richie wanted to fling himself into traffic a little bit.

Just as he went to stand, he heard a light chuckle. “You need a light, babes?” He turned to look at the fucking *angel* who had offered him her lighter. She wore short hair and dungarees accompanied by an undershirt, and Richie swore he was in love.

“I’m in love,” he said. She laughed at that, and he grinned a grin bigger than the solar system and nodded. “Yes, fucking... *please*.” A kid with curly hair that reminded him of spaghetti walked inside the building, but Richie didn’t pay any attention to him. The girl took her place next to him and handed him her later.

“Bev.”

“Richie.” *Bev. Bev. Bev. That’s a good name. Short for...*

“So, you out here just wasting time or are you here for something?” she asked, pulling out her own pack of cigarettes. He realised what she was hinting at and he lit his, taking a drag before responding.

“I’m here for... a group thing,” he said tentatively, afraid of oversharing. He handed Bev (that fucking name...) her lighter and he went quiet again, taking another drag.

“Yeah, so am I. It’s kind of -” she was cut off by the *screeeeeetch!* from a car hauling ass into the parking lot. In it was a woman smoothing down some kid’s hair, and talking what seemed to

be sternly to them. Richie focused on a scratch on the door. *What's it from? Did someone hit it with their car door? Weathering?* “Hey. Hey, Earth to Richie. You good?”

“Huh? Oh! Oh, yeah, sorry.” He shook his head and looked back at her. “What're you here for?” *No. Wrong question. Idiot.*

“A group therapy thing. Jackie, my therapist, thinks -”

“You see Jackie?”

“Oh, yeah, man. She's *always* on my case about how -”

“*Smoking kills!*” they said together in a mock, nasally voice. Richie heard the car door open and close, and then the heavy doors of the building open and close, but he paid no mind.

Bill wiped his hands on his jeans and took a deep breath, trying to muster up the courage to actually fucking say something. He needed to *say something*, but he couldn't think of anything to say, and he kind of wanted to die. He looked around the room, looking to see if he could fine Jackie anywhere. He saw a woman who kind of looked like her... if Jackie was a hooker with hair like straw.

He wandered around the room a bit and looked at the table of goods. *That's... weird. She didn't say anything about -* “Hey. Kid,” a gruff voice interrupted his thoughts. “Ya mom here or somethin'? Carol, is this ya kid?” Bill frowned and looked around the room one last time before his eyes settled on the fucking banner. *DERRY AA: 50 YEARS STRONG!*

He found himself wanting to jump off of a roof. He rushed away from the Carol dude and back into the hallway, wringing his hands together aggressively. “He th - thrusts his f - f - fuh - f - fuck!”

He kept attempting to mumble it, not quite able to get past spitting out a couple Fs before giving up and starting over. When he finally found the right room, he entered it with his head low and his eyes trained on the floor. He heard a quiet conversation - something about keeping proper drawers instead of baskets, what the *fuck* - but kept to

himself. He found himself taking the seat adjacent to hers, folding his arms against his chest, and staring at his worn sneakers.

He finally looked up when she started to talk, but when his gaze landed on the boy to her right, his throat went dry. A mess of curls sat atop his head, and a blue button-up was tucked into dark jeans. A thin strip of pale skin showed where his jeans were rolled up just above the cuff of his sock. Bill's eyes travelled back up to his face and he couldn't stop staring. He had fairly neat eyebrows and his cheeks were turning red quickly - *oh fuck*.

The boy caught Bill staring and was *blushing*, and Bill swore he was in love. A pink-faced, chubby boy walked into the room next, talking with a taller, muscular boy. He caught the end of their conversation; "Is this... it is! Thank you so much, man, I really appreciate it." *Did they get lost, too?* Only a few moments after that pair, a final pair walks in. A short girl with dungarees and a (much) taller boy with long, curly hair came in talking loudly about some obscure band Bill had never heard of. *Great. People know each other already. Am I the only one who doesn't know anyone?*

The chubby boy who had walked in just minutes prior was staring at the girl, and Bill had to bite back a laugh.

"Dude, Bear Hands is... fucking amazing. I've never met anyone else who knew them!" Richie said too quickly. Bev had made a reference to one of their songs, and Richie was fucking *buzzing*. He had run up the stairs two at a time and was breathing a little heavier than someone else his age probably should have been, but he blamed it on the smoking. Yeah. It was because he smoked.

They made it to the room and Richie was *still* raving about Bear Hands. He waved at Jackie and found himself taking a seat next to a boy who was staring at the wall (or maybe at the boy with hair that reminded Richie of spaghetti that he had seen outside) and looked up, and he stopped talking. He was gawking at the tiny kid sitting next to Jackie, twiddling his thumbs and looking around the room nervously. He looked as if he was about to throw up, and Richie wanted to just hold him and never let go.

"Hey, everyone. So... you are all my clients," Jackie finally said, after everyone calmed down and settled in. "It isn't... typical for therapists to do this, but I think... I think you'll all find some comfort in this and in each other. I want us to go in a circle -"

"Clockwise," the tiny kid and the Spaghetti Kid said at the same time.

Jackie chuckled and raised her eyebrows. "A... clockwise circle, I guess, and introduce ourselves. Keep it over, let's say... fifteen seconds, and under forty. Sound good?"

Everyone nodded, and Spaghetti Kid looked a bit sick. *Is he sick? Does he not like talking in front of people? Does he not like anyone here? How can he not like Bev? I love Bev. Maybe he doesn't know anyone. Is it me he doesn't like?* Richie found himself thinking a little too hard until he heard the tiny kid start talking.

"I'm Eddie," he said, with more confidence than Richie expected. "I, uh. I have mysophobia. That's the fear of -" *Germs.* "- germs." *Called it.* Richie couldn't keep his eyes off of the kid. *Eddie. Eddie. Eddison? No, no one's called Eddison. Edmund? Edgar? Edwin? Edward? Edward seems the most likely. Does he know that I'm in love with him already? No, he can't. I haven't talked to him.*

"Richie?" Jackie *rudely* interrupted his thoughts, "It's all you, Bub." Bub.

"I. Uh." He found himself choking up a little bit because Eddie's eyes met his. *Fuck. Fuck.* "I'm Richie, I have ADHD, and I am so fucking gay right now," he blurred out. It was quiet for half a second and he wanted to run to the window and *jump the fuck out*, but then everyone started laughing, and he relaxed a bit.

The stocky (and really fucking attractive) dude next to him introduced himself as Mike Who Has PTSD And Trouble Sleeping At Night. The chubby boy who had walked in with Mike Who Has PTSD And Trouble Sleeping At Night introduced *himself* as Ben Who Has A Fear Of Meeting New People And Going New Places.

Spaghetti Kid just said he was called Stan (or Stanley, if they

weren't okay with informal names.) and had "minor" (Jackie rolled her eyes when he said minor, so Richie knew it was bullshit. Jackie was good people, and wouldn't do something like that unless necessary.) OCD. When everyone was done, Jackie encouraged them to talk about their interests.

Stanley really liked birds, Mike was into the town's history, Ben was surprisingly into engineering, Bev liked gardening (Richie *really* didn't expect that.) and music, Bill was into writing, and Eddie was into anything and everything, which Richie found *so fucking cute*. Richie himself said he was interested in cute boys with pink polos, which Bev chuckled at and Eddie went red at.

Everyone talked about the shit they wanted to do when they were older at first. It was a way for everyone to get to know each other, and Richie... liked it. He liked being able to ramble on about not knowing exactly what he wanted to do, but he wanted it to be *something* with music, and he listened very, *very* closely to Eddie talking about maybe being a doctor if he was able to get over being around sick people.

Jackie was ecstatic that by the end of the session, everyone was joking around and telling each other to shut the fuck up. Everyone dispersed at their leisure, Ben stayed behind to help Stan put away chairs and he left, then Stan stayed for a little bit to talk to Jackie about his next appointment and if he could move it. When he realised he'd have to walk home fucking *alone*, he wanted to die a little.

Jackie put her hand on his shoulder and she smiled. "I'm proud of you," she said softly. "Thank you for doing this. Promise me you'll come next time?" He nodded and she smiled even wider. She gave him an encouraging thumbs up before leaving, leaving him alone. He walked out the door and down the stairs, counting them as he did, and jumped a little when a soft voice said, "H - Hey." *It's the kid with the stutter.*

"I, uh... I s - suh - saw that you w - were the last p - person, and I w - w - wuh -"

"Wanted to wait?" Stan tried, smiling a little. When Bill nodded and

blushed a little, he told himself that he wasn't tearing up at all. Nope. "Thank you, that... that really means a lot -" *What was his fucking name? Ben? No, that's the kid who was staring at Bev. Bill. He's Bill.* "-Bill."

Bill nodded and he held his own hand behind his back as they started to walk. "So, y - you have... OCD, right? Is... is th - the st - st - stuh -" Bill looked visibly strained. He spat out a couple more consonants before Stan cut him off.

"No, it's... it's okay. I think it's cute."

Bill's face went red and he looked back at the ground, trying to hide a smile. "Thank you." It was a little bit awkward until Bill broke the silence again with, "What's your favourite b - bird?" Rather than properly stuttering (or, at least, what Stan *assumed* was "proper" stuttering) on 'favourite', he drug out the F a little. It was cute.

"Kinglets, maybe? The fat ones are really cute and there are so many different ones! I saw one when I was passing the park the other day, and I got really happy because it looked so happy, and they're usually only here in the winter, I don't know what's up with the leaves and winter birds in the summer or whatever, but I -" Stan realised how fast he was talking and how fucking *stupid* he sounded, raving about birds to some guy he just met. "I'm doing it again, aren't I?"

Bill chuckled and shook his head. "It's ch - charming. I don't know a lot ab - buh - about birds, b - but it's nice to learn new things."

Stan sighed in relief and then sighed in despair when he realised that they were on his street. "This is my street. That's... that's my house."

"It was really nice m - meeting you," Bill said softly. He looked up at Stan and blushed a little bit. "I'll, um... I'll see you next week."

Stan nodded and hesitantly started walking away from Bill. It felt as if anything more than three feet away from Bill was a negative pole, and Bill himself was the positive pole that Stan needed to stick to. When he got to his house, he turned around to see if Bill was still

there. He had just started walking, so Stan called for him. When he turned around, Stan shouted, with as much confidence as he could muster, “Do you want to meet up before next week!?”

Bill’s posture got straighter, his lips stretched into a grin, and he seemed to be fucking *glowing*. “Y - Yeah! Where?” he shouted back.

“The drive-in! Wednesday! At six!”

“Okay! I’ll see you then!”

They parted again, and when Stan walked into his house, he pumped his fist into his air and danced all the way to his room.